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# The Self, Its Ideal, and God: The Implications of Non-Objective Self-Experience

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**The Self, Its Ideal, and God: The Implications of Nonobjective Self-Experience**  
**Review Essay on James G. Hart's *Who One Is***  
**by Jeremy H. Smith**

**Introduction**

This essay pulls together, explains, and evaluates the overall argument of James Hart's *Who One Is* (2 vols., 2009). Hart's work is path-breaking for four reasons: it represents an extremely detailed and rigorous revisioning of Husserlian phenomenology in the light of Michel Henry's philosophy of non-objective self-awareness; in that context, it develops a new Husserlian ethics; with that ethics as a starting point, it integrates Christian—specifically Thomistic—theology with phenomenology; and finally, it does all of this in dialogue with multiple traditions. Indeed, Hart's comprehensive engagement with competing perspectives is an essential aspect of his achievement, and one which deserves to lead to greater engagement in such dialogue on the part of the wider philosophical world.

The aim of Hart's project is to work out the implications of the notion of self as non-objective ipseity for ethics and theology. Those implications respond to three fundamental questions: 1) What does it mean for the self to be non-objective and for "I" reference to be necessarily non-sortal? 2) How does this understanding of self impact our understanding of conscience and the ideal self? 3) And given this interpretation, how are we to understand the relationship of the ideal self to God? In this essay I will attempt to show how Hart answers each of these questions, and how his account coherently and convincingly interrelates non-objective ipseity, the ideal self, and God.

## The Nonobjective Self as Propertyless Ipseity

What does it mean to be a self and to experience oneself? This is the central question Hart addresses throughout both volumes of *Who One Is*. “Self” can be taken in many senses. “Self” may mean personality, and personality may mean a set of traits. But “self” has a deeper meaning: that which *has* the personality or the traits and that to which the world appears. How does self in this deepest sense experience itself, and what does it mean for there to be “self in this deepest sense”? Hart argues that self-knowledge must come from the first-person perspective. In particular, the third-person perspective cannot replace or completely account for that which we know through the first-person perspective. What do we know from the first-person perspective? We know the world as it appears from that perspective. We know the acts we engage in as we know the world from that perspective. And we know those acts pre-reflectively as well as reflectively. We know our life—our own current of lived experience, of mood, and feeling. We know our bodies both objectively and pre-objectively—as that which we can see, and as that *by which* we perceive the world and act upon it. But, in regard to all this, Hart asks:

Thus if we take the route of knowing myself and mine through identification of properties or activities we must ask, how do I know that the mental states or acts of consciousness are mine or about me, or how are activities *mine*, unless I know that the self having these states or doing these things is myself? What makes me to be *me* and mine to be *mine*? Are there some signature properties or descriptions that signify me and make them clearly *mine*? (WOI 1, 72)

Hart points out that there is no objective property that my lived feelings, my perceptions, or my acts possess by reference to which we know that they are all “mine.” Beyond even that, “there

is no criterion that one may apply to determine whether I am an *I*; this is a primitive ‘datum,’ and immediately apprehended by one who is wakeful, foremost as a thinker and responsible agent” (WOI 1, 74). I know directly, immediately, and prereflectively, simply by living through my own self-experience, that I am I and that these experiences are mine. Hart also shows clearly that this form of prereflective self-experience is infallible. I may mistakenly identify a manikin as a person, or one person as another, and certainly I may be mistaken about the thoughts that belong to another. But I cannot be mistaken in my prereflective self experience as I, and in my reference to myself as “I” in making first person statements. And my direct, prereflective first person experience is the inescapably necessary basis of my knowledge of myself as myself and of my life as my life. One does not know oneself as being oneself, and that which belongs to oneself as belonging to oneself, through the objective identification of any property.

What is it that one senses in sensing oneself or facing an Other? It is not simply the multiplicity of my own or the other’s experiences. It is “I” itself or “another” I itself. But in attempting to define what it means to be an “I” we face a double paradox: First, any “I” itself is propertyless in its uniqueness, and yet even as a sheer propertyless “I” it represents, or better, *is*, a unique richness and depth. Second, whatever it is by virtue of which I am uniquely I—call it my “I-ness”—is both that which all “I’s” must somehow have in common and, at the same time, that which *cannot* be shared.

*The paradox of propertyless depth:* Hart argues that the self which one recognizes as uniquely one’s own, is unique and distinct from every other self. But this ownness, uniqueness, and distinction are not a matter of unique properties. I do not identify myself through the identification of unique properties; and it is not by virtue of unique properties that I am myself as unique. The self is essentially “propertyless.” This means at least: that by which a self most

fundamentally is itself is not a matter of properties. But this does not mean that the self is some sort of undifferentiated mystical blur. Despite the lack of objective signs, I *am* able to know myself as not another, and also to make distinctions within my own self-experience. Those distinctions include distinctions among, for example, objects as experienced, the acts by which they are experienced, and the I which experiences the objects through the acts. The question arises in what sense distinctions may be possible without the identification of properties.

The most basic “level” of “I,” or the absolutely central “core” of I, is what Husserl calls “the pure I” (See Hua 4, sec. 22), and Hart also calls “the myself” or (along with Michel Henry) “ipseity.” A defining feature of the “pure I” is what Husserl calls its “act transcendence.” I completely inhabit or pervade every act I engage in, and it is this pervasive habitation that makes the act “mine.” However, this does not mean that I simply am my acts, and certainly not that “the I” is just a collection of acts. Rather, “the I” is the one who engages in the acts. And “the I” is more than, and other than, any act, or all the acts together, including all acts I have engaged in, or will or could ever engage in. The acts are not profiles on the I. “The pure I...does not offer itself in profiles and aspects. Rather it is ‘given’ in absolute self-hood (*absoluter Selbstheit*) and in a unity that is not perspectival” (WOI 1, 158). In this deepest sense of ipseity, I know myself completely, with no shadow, no determinable implicitness, with no profile or possibility of profile or perspective. The “myself” in this sense is also without properties. Even if acts and feelings might be said to themselves have properties, it is not through the possession of any property that they are mine, or that I know them to be mine.

While “the myself” or the pure I is “propertyless” this does not mean it is a pure form, or that it does not have a unique richness of its own: “Further, it is not empty as an empty intention or absolutely empty of ‘content,’ i.e., there is the oddly rich content of the ‘myself’” (WOI 1,

146-47). The “myself” as pure, propertyless I, has a depth that exceeds the specifiable multiplicity of acts, experiences, and feelings. And this depth is not really “a” depth, but is rather that what it most essentially means to be oneself, as “a” myself. It is the depth of nonobjective self-awareness, and of the non-objective self, *as such*.

*The paradox of “I-ness”*: On the one hand, it clearly makes sense to talk about what it means to be an individual conscious being, and we clearly know that others meaningfully refer to themselves as “I,” experience themselves as “I,” and that what it means for others to refer to and experience themselves as “I” is, at least in a way, clearly no different than what it means for me to experience myself as “I.” But on the other hand, “I” is precisely that which cannot be plural. “I-ness” (if we can even speak of such a thing) cannot be an essence which is instantiated in many individuals. For “I-ness” is fundamentally being a unique individual. In a very basic way, it seems impossible to make sense of what is at the same time so clear and obvious. And here it does not seem that we have only an incomplete or inadequate understanding. Rather, the very understanding we have, which in a way is perfectly clear and adequate, seems impossible.

Hart, drawing upon both Gerard Manley Hopkins and Duns Scotus, introduces the idea of the “myself” as an individual essence, or *haecceity*. It seems to me that the notion of *haecceity* or individual essence is Hart’s response to the two central paradoxes of ipseity: the paradox of propertyless depth, and the paradox of “I-ness.” The paradox of propertyless depth arises because the richness and depth of the myself is inseparable from its unique individuality, and that unique individuality is absolutely not a matter of a unique set of properties—nor even the unique specific character of what Husserl calls the concretum of an eidetic singularity. The paradox of “I-ness” arises because something like a concept of “I-ness” inevitably arises in our reflection on self and self experience, yet “I-ness” cannot be a property or even a universal. To begin to do

justice to these reflections, Hart proposes that we regard “each” propertyless ipseity as an individual essence (not to be confused with its eidetic singularity, which has to do with properties). Such an individual essence or haecceity differs from eidetic essences in that, by its very nature, it is not an essence with instances, and yet it is more than bare particularity:

Individuals are meaning-full only by reason of “what’s” or properties. Yet Who is of a different order, and we want to secure this by claiming that the distinction among “Who’s” is as “essential” or fundamental as that between essences and genera. But whereas these are universals that are instantiable and communicable, Who refers to an uninstantiable and incommunicable “individual essence.” (WOI, 1, 280-81)

To make this point clear, Hart refers to a familiar thought experiment: suppose a copy could be made of a living human body down to the last subatomic detail, and suppose this resulted also in an exact, living copy of the mind associated with the body. The two bodies/minds would at least initially be instantiations of exactly the same concrete eidetic singularity. But their individual essences, their haecceity, *who* each of them is, would nevertheless be absolutely different. Hart believes that to adequately account for this absolute difference, we need the notion of individual essence. The point of describing ipseity in terms of an individual essence is that while the ipseity is propertyless, it is nevertheless not a bare particular. In its unique singularity an ipseity has a depth and richness that transcends all properties and indeed the particular current of its experience as well. As Hart puts it: “each of us is such that she herself, in this respect, alone holds the secret as to who she is, and this ‘known’ haecceity is essentially non-objective and propertyless. This is the heart of what we will call ‘mystery’” (WOI 1, 278). But despite its mystery and paradox, we can also say that ipseity is the most intelligible of all. Hart is even willing to refer to it as “hyper-intelligible”—a term

which recalls Michel Henry's characterization of ipseity as "archi-intelligible" (see *Incarnation*, 124-25). By "hyperintelligible" or "archi-intelligible" I think they mean: that which is more intelligible than anything, that whose intelligibility underlies absolutely all other "forms" of intelligibility, that whose intelligibility is utterly different from the intelligibility of all else that is intelligible, or at least that whose intelligibility is of a fundamentally different order.

The notion of individual essence is an essential step in Hart's construction of the phenomenology and finally the theology of who one is. But—and I don't think Hart pretends otherwise—it does not completely resolve the paradoxes of ipseity. "Each" ipseity is an individual essence or haecceity. And yet it is meaningful, and inescapable, that in some sense each ipseity somehow partakes of a common essence of ipseity. And again, what is meant by "common essence" here is not simply the "common essence" of humanity, or the "common essence" of all of the dimensions of transcendental subjectivity, but precisely the "common essence" of what we even mean by "who one is"—as the one who has the personhood and carries out and lives through all of the dimensions of transcendental subjectivity. The hyper-intelligibility of ipseity is an intelligibility that simply will not let us think it through to any kind of end. Perhaps this inability to be thought through to the end is precisely what we mean by saying it is a mystery. But that something is a mystery in this sense does not mean it is *absolutely* incomprehensible. As Hart puts it, "'mystery' does not refer to what is beyond our knowledge absolutely. Rather here we have a 'knowledge' of what we are calling an 'essence' whose intelligibility is not of the same order of the intelligibility of considerations in the third-person and which are rich in properties" (WOI 1, 310). While it is instructive to note that this mystery is of a different order of intelligibility, it also seems that its very intelligibility contains an essential paradox: that which essentially cannot be shared—the very essence of individual



ipseity—at the same time in some way must be shared. This mystery is born not only of a profound fullness and depth, but also, like the mystery of death, of a blockage and frustration of every attempt to think it through to the end.

What of the other essential paradox—the notion that the myself is propertyless and yet deep? Part of what we mean here by ‘deep’ is that the myself, if it is a myself, is conscious, is a will, is a knower, is that to which the world can appear, is that which appears to itself non-objectively. But haven’t I just enumerated properties? According to Hart these “properties”

are inseparable a priori synthetic moments of the *eidos* “myself” and differ from properties which accrue by way of explicating a determinable bare substrate of “this-here” which has potential, but no actual intrinsic, intelligibility. That is, the referent of the bare “this-here” awaits explication and presently is a determinate indeterminateness or a determinate determinability. And surely these inseparable a priori moments differ from a posteriori attributes which accrue to “I myself” by the temporal unfolding of the personal life in the world. But these essential properties or radical essence do not amount to a propertied version of “myself” or the Leibnizian position which denies an individual essence which is propertyless. (WOI 1, 315)

I agree with Hart that this is a meaningful distinction, but I find his account of it somewhat unsatisfactory (while bearing in mind that these issues may never be accounted for in an entirely satisfactory way). At issue here should be not what is an analytic, or synthetic apriori, truth about a concept, but rather what the “relationship” is between my being “individual” and my being “conscious.” In some sense I am able to distinguish between “individuality” and “consciousness.” What enables us to make distinctions like this is a significant issue—and an issue which Hart has not had time to fully explore. But I think it is phenomenologically clear

that “who I am” is not correctly described as an individual who has the property of consciousness. The ontology and logic of ipseity are fundamentally different from the ontology and logic of objects in the world. “Individuality” and “consciousness” are utterly one. Consciousness is immanent in “I” in a way no property could possibly be immanent in an object. Taking the discussion slightly further than Hart does, in terms of a logic of consciousness, one might say that the reason consciousness is not a property of an ipseity is that consciousness pertains to the being of ipseity itself. Consciousness is not a property an ipseity might or might not have. One might even say that consciousness is not even a property any ipseity necessarily has. It is not a property that conscious beings have; rather it is a dimension of the very being of conscious beings.

### **The Ideal Self**

Obviously, nobody is merely a "pure I." But what more must we say about "an I" in order to do justice to "who one is"? Any "I" is more than just a "pure I" first of all because it lives through many experiences, constitutes many objects, performs many actions, etc. The "myself" is not only a propertyless self-identity. It is also the identity of the person in and through all of the person's acts, traits, and experiences. The "I" which emerges in the fullness of its experiences is itself a unity, and beyond that, aspires to be a unity. Finally, the identity of the "myself" is the identity of who one is, in the sense of who one has turned out to be, and who one "really" is in the sense of one's ideal self. The ideal self is not another I over against "myself." Nor is it reducible to a set of characteristics or traits that anyone might exemplify. Who one "really" is in terms of the self one strives to be true to, really is, in a sense, who one really is. In being untrue to one's ideal self, one is being untrue to none other than oneself. One contradicts oneself on the

deepest level possible. How does the pure I or the myself "relate to" the I as a whole person, with traits, habits, experiences, character? And how does it relate to the ideal self it aspires to be?

I am always becoming myself, in the sense that I am always growing and developing into the person I am, with all my traits and characteristics and experiences. Each action is a position-taking, taken in light of my sense of the kind of person I aspire to be. I build up myself, and build up my sense of the kind of person I aspire to and ought to be, through the many position-takings in which my life consists. What is the origin of all these actions? They originate from the myself. The myself is not only the identity of myself as the one who becomes "personified" through acts as the one who has a certain character, but it is also the entelechy of this personification. The person I am able to become is somehow immanent in the myself, and this is essential to the myself as such.

Of course such immanence cannot be reduced to a definable state of affairs, or even multiple possible states of affairs. This immanence as well is only accessible from the first-person perspective, as precisely the unobjectifiable sense of "who I really am" which is able to be more or less realized by actions I am able to initiate. And the immanence of the personification is inseparable from, although not equivalent to, the immanence of the ideal self. As Hart puts it,

Iipseity as the 'myself' is actualized in the world through personhood; in this sense, personhood is the telos of the 'myself.' But personhood is also the means because the ideal person, which is the telos, is realized through the personification of the 'myself,' i.e., actual development and metamorphoses of the person. (WOI 2, 184-85)

The ideal self is immanent in the myself, and is who the myself "truly" is. Nevertheless the myself, the realized personification of myself, and the ideal self, are distinct:

Thus this ideal self as that to which we endlessly aspire and which endlessly eludes our approach cannot be understood simply as “the myself.” But neither can it be understood as a mere empty projected ideal of what each aspires to be. Rather it must be the actualization or personification of the “myself,” its “truth.” (WOI 2, 214)

This raises the question of what sort of unity and what sort of distinction is here at issue. Clearly it is fundamentally unlike the distinction of an object and its properties, or the distinction between properties. The ideal self and the realized personification are not properties of the myself. And it is also good here to bear in mind that this is not a question of a distinction, e.g. among character traits, but rather of the distinction between the myself as “pure I,” and the myself as the unity of the realized personification, and again as the unity of the ideal self. In Hart’s terms, the three are the “same” self, but are not therefore “identical.” We might say they are dimensions of what it even means to be a self at all—just as are “conscious,” “able to will,” “able to reflect.”

At the culmination of his project Hart works out an understanding of the relationship of the ideal self to God which he regards not as a matter of phenomenology strictly speaking, but rather as a matter of theological speculation within the “logical space” opened up by Christian faith. The ‘myself,’ as such, by contrast, is anything but a speculation. In Hart’s presentation, nothing is more phenomenologically evident than ‘the myself.’ But what of the relation of the myself to the self’s realized personification, and the relation to the ideal self? For Hart, these issues become at least partly a matter of speculation. And yet the whole drift of his analysis depends on discovering descriptions of ways in which these matters are in some way experienced

For Hart the experience of the ideal self (closely related to the experience of conscience) is a matter of confronting a limit situation. The defining limit situations for the self are death,

conscience, and love. Drawing upon both Jaspers and Kierkegaard, Hart adopts the term ‘Existenz’ for the self insofar as it confronts, and is able to confront, those limit situations. ‘Existenz’ refers both to who one really is and to the fundamental mode of experience through which one realizes who one really is. One way the limit situation of death leads to the limit situation of conscience, Hart goes on to claim, is that death challenges us to take a new perspective on life. Death challenges us to think of our life as a whole as if from its finish, and ask, “can I affirm the way I have lived without qualification?” We fail to seriously pose this question because, though we may know we will die, we don’t *realize* it. The difference between knowing a fact through a merely objective, empty grasping, and *realizing*, is crucial to the notion of “awakening to Existenz.” The difference between merely entertaining an idea, and taking it seriously as actually applying to one’s own life, is not a difference that can be objectively defined. In this lies the meaning of Existenz as irreducible to any form of objective fact or being. Our realization of death involves more than our confrontation with the horror of nothingness, or potential nothingness. It also prompts us to adopt a perspective on our life we would not have had otherwise, a perspective Hart terms a prospective retrospection. This prospective retrospection prompts us to consider that our lives will one day amount to a whole that is over and done with—and this prompts us to consider whether we will look back with regret upon that whole, upon what our life as a whole has amounted to. I hasten to point out that Hart clearly denies that a life can ever be the kind of finished whole whose parts all fit together into a sort of symphony with which we can be satisfied and then die content. He makes the point quite clearly, in fact, that it is precisely when our projects and our hopes have been realized as well as could possibly be expected that we most clearly also realize the inadequacy and unsatisfactoriness of our mortal life as such. And no “wholeness” can release us from the horror of annihilation. The

point of the “prospective retrospection” is rather the call for us to consider our life as a whole, to consider what it amounts to, and to consider whether it has been honestly oriented toward the individual ideal each of us is called to pursue. The realization of a prospective retrospection in the face of death is a “gathering” of oneself that represents what it means in the most essential way to take one’s life seriously.

The experience of prospective retrospection leads not merely to an encounter with one’s life as a *whole*, but also to the encounter with what one’s life is *for*. The whole is called to be a unity, and that lies in a call to be true to “the one thing needful.” Hart holds that our experience of “the one thing needful” is conscience and “the one thing needful” is, finally, love. Not only death, but also conscience, represent “limit situations” in Jasper’s sense. About conscience as a limit situation, it is especially true that it awakens us

to the center of ourselves, i.e., to ourselves as Existenz. With limit-situations we come alive to ourselves in a way that is dormant in our typical everyday being in the all-situation of the world. (WOI 2, 106)

And the experience of conscience is an example of the kind of experience through which we concretely realize that which is of absolute importance for one’s life as a whole, or better, for who one is, in the deepest, most inescapable sense (WOI 2, 102). Conscience is the mode of living by which we experience our truth to, or betrayal of, “the one thing needful.” This experience is the confrontation of myself with myself as I have constituted myself, and in the light of my ideal self. This confrontation Hart terms “witnessing.” But witnessing is not primarily a matter of reflection:

Conscience is the presence of me myself as the still valid personal essence that I have constituted more or less in conformity with the light of my ideal. Disregarding the

visual-optic aspects of the mirror metaphor, conscience's presencing of one's personal essence may be regarded as a mirror. A mirror reflects back without the mediation of position-taking acts—and that is why when we look in the mirror we may reactively tuck in our stomachs or put on our “best face,” etc. Of course, conscience is not myself being *seen* but *witnessed to*. But it is not through intentional acts.... What is mirrored is the self's personal essence that I, the substrate of this self, have constituted through the salient affective, perceptual and intellectual acts in the light of its self-ideal. These are what have been formative of the essence it has to date. (WOI 2, 131)

I suggest understanding Hart's point in this way: I experience that essence by being that essence. Conscience is a matter of honestly seeing oneself as one is in the light of one's ideal. At issue here is what we really mean by “see in the light of” in this case. One looks at oneself in the mirror of conscience and what one “sees” is the very self one is, as one has constituted oneself. To see oneself in the mirror of conscience is to be open to the many contradictions one sees in oneself between who one has become and the ideal self one is committed to being. The alternative is to look into a mirror without cleaning it or to keep the light low or to not face it squarely. The contradiction or consonance one “sees” is not a merely a matter of objective comparison but is felt within one's lived experience of being oneself, of being who one is.

What does it mean to know the sort of person one is, and what does it mean to know the sort of person one aims to be? And what do we mean by “sort of person”? Is “sort of person” just shorthand for a collection of actions? No, for several reasons. For one, what is relevant is not just the actions but their motivation. But here again, what do we mean by motivation? Not just general characteristics. We mean actions which are done by a certain kind of person. And here by “sort of person” we do not mean a category. Also, in willing to do something, as Hart

says, I will not just an action, but specifically an action *as done by me*. My question is: what does it mean to do this? How do we know that the action we are willing is an action to be done by me? But here again, what is going on here is not simply that we anticipate reflection on—objectively grasping—an action we will have done, or possibly will have done. We are anticipating or imagining doing the action ourselves.

It seems to me that this sort of anticipation or imagination itself must have a non-objective dimension. A way to identify this non-objective dimension might be to consider the difference between simply considering an action as an abstract possibility, and really taking seriously the possibility of the action being done by me. One way—which people often take—of avoiding a serious consideration of one’s real willingness or unwillingness to do something is precisely to self-deceptively limit one’s consideration to a reflection upon actions as merely as objective states of affairs. One may then find when the time really comes to do what one proposed, that one wimps out, failing to do what one knows to be right. Or, in a somewhat different scenario, one may find that in the very moment one is to actually do the deed one planned, one’s conscience suddenly awakens, and one actually refuses to do what one really knew was wrong all along. “I hadn’t realized what it was going to be like to really do it.”

It must be possible to really anticipate a deed as done by oneself in a serious and honest way. It is possible to, so to speak, genuinely put oneself “into the shoes” of one’s own “future” self. This sort of concrete empathy with one’s future self is not a merely matter of a prospective *objective* reflection, but includes a non-objective dimension which, at least I would say, lies in one’s own non-objective self experience itself. Conscience lies not in the mere anticipation, but rather in anticipation which takes the action seriously as an action to be done by me. That self-witnessing is finally something *felt*—it is a dimension of non-objective self-awareness that



cannot be accounted for in merely objective terms. Or we might say that the ‘mirroring’ of which Hart speaks is a conversation with oneself occurring on a purely nonobjective level. This level is precisely that of *Existenz*.

Without this dimension of personal reality, which cannot be reduced to any sort of accounting for objective features, the serious anticipation essential to the formation of character would be impossible. And what one confronts through the honest effort to anticipate or imagine what it would be like to actually do what one proposes is not merely the action itself. One also confronts and is on the verge of becoming the kind of person who would do that sort of action. One might feel revulsion against being that kind of person in the case where that kind of person contradicts the kind of person one really aspires to be. One’s sense of the kind of person one aspires to be contradicts the kind of person who would do such a thing—and I take this as an example of what Hart means by the “witnessing” of conscience:

Conscience is “I myself” at a distance, i.e., the I whom I am called to be and whom I have constituted and who is still valid, addressing me through passive synthesis; it is who I have constituted myself to be in the ongoing validity of my position-taking acts “reminding me” of who I have defined myself to be and who I am called to be. (WOI 2, 134)

Hart insists that the “I” that witnesses is not another “I” over against the “I” witnessed to. The witnessing “I” is the *same* “I” as the one witnessed to, but nevertheless not the *identical* “I.”

Also, witnessing is not a matter of an intentional act:

If we say it is an “ongoing process of affective, perceptual and intellectual self-mediation” or self-mirroring, we run the risk of thinking of conscience as the witnessing or presencing of the essential self as the result of affective, perceptual, and intellectual acts.

Rather what is mirrored is the self's personal essence that I, the substrate of this self, have constituted through the salient affective, perceptual and intellectual acts in the light of its self-ideal. (WOI 2, 131)

As I have already suggested, I think another way to describe such witnessing which is other than an intentional act would be in terms of non-objective self-awareness. One's non-objective awareness of oneself includes one's sense of the kind of person one is. And one's sense of the kind of person one is includes the sense of the kind of person one aspires to be. In aspiring to be one's ideal self, one, again, does not merely will or hope for a certain state of affairs or fact about oneself. In aspiring to be *that sort of person* one does not aspire to be someone else. One aspires to be that sort of person *as oneself*. The "relation" between who one has become and who one aspires to be lies entirely within one's nonobjective self. It is a dimension of the being of that nonobjective self itself. The unity of these two is so deep that it makes sense to describe them as being the *same*, though not the *identical* "I,"—and that is why it makes sense to describe the kind of person one aspires to be, as who one "really" is, and a betrayal of that ideal as a betrayal of oneself.

I think a further distinction should be here brought into play, which it seems to me is implicit in Hart's presentation: The kind of person one aspires to be is in a sense an aspect of the kind of person one has become. What develops as a person grows is not simply the character one is in firm, habitual possession of, but also one's understanding of the character one aspires to be true to, which may include ideals one falls short of. However, isn't it also the case that one's very understanding of one's ideal is itself something one knows can and should grow and develop? If this is so, one's "ideal self" has a double sense: on the one hand, the ideal self one consciously strives to work toward, and on the other, the ideal one strives to more clearly

understand or even discover. It is difficult to explain in what sense one can possibly be conscious of one's ideal in the latter case. And yet, the ideal against which one measures one's very understanding of one's ideal must in some sense be present if any progress is to be possible within that understanding. That ideal is present, perhaps, through the very sameness of the "who" in "who one is" and "who one is called to be." Through that sameness we experience our calling not only as an already defined requirement but also as an ever further horizon.

Hart develops the idea of calling or vocation through a consideration of Husserl's notion of the "general will," Blondel's distinction between the "willing will" and the "willed will," the notion of the ideal self, the notion of entelechy, and finally, of love. "Who one is" is inseparable from the "general will" of one's life. Life is not just a collection of acts and experiences engaged in and undergone by a single 'myself,' but includes an ineluctable *nisus* toward a unity, in which those acts and experiences themselves are gathered together and synthesized. But the "general will" toward unity is not directed toward any particular object. As Hart puts it:

At the base of the I-center is the *élan* or general feeble will of the primal presencing passively-synthetically bringing about a synthesis of one's whole life. This general will surpasses any particular will and any particular willing is inadequate to this general feeble will. We propose that we think of the "myself," in the establishment of its personhood, as a *dynamism* or entelechial principle that inaugurates this general willing of the person. We might call this "empersonation," because, like "incarnation" or "enworlding," there is suggested that the dynamic principle is transcendent as to its origin and yet its fuller life is in the immanent actualization of itself in, e.g., the body and world.... (WOI 2, 175)

Hart develops Husserl's notion of the general will in terms of Blondel's distinction between the "willing will" and the "willed will": Hart identifies "the dynamism or general will of the personified 'myself,'" with the "willing will"; and "the explicit acts in the course of life," with "the willed will" (WOI 2, 163-64). There is a willing will that underlies all of our willed willing, i.e. to do this or that. The willing will is inseparable from ipseity and is in fact directed toward the kind of person I believe in being, that I believe I ought to be, that I strive to be. The willing will embraces and drives the totality of my always ongoing personification in response to my self ideal. But neither the personification nor the ideal are objects of the willing will. The willing will is myself as "pure I" embracing, or coming to grips with and shaping, myself as this concrete person. And the way the person I aspire to be witnesses to myself cannot be described as an intentional act. So my facing myself as my self ideal, and the willing will which is the impetus or dynamism which prompts and inspires me to strive toward my self ideal, must not themselves be intentional acts either, even though that striving does not occur apart from specific position takings in relation to concrete situations.

I think these considerations can help make sense of the idea that one's ideal self is the "same" as the "pure I," as well as the self as it has been constituted up to the present moment, and that this sameness is in a sense experienced in the depths of our non-objective self-experience itself. Hart holds that the myself is "the entelechy of my life as a person" and that this is possible because "the unique essence of the 'myself' has to be embedded in an 'ideal' axiological context." That context "is opened up by the general will. Thus the condition for the possibility that ipseity be the principle of the teleological perfection of one's personal existence is that it be embedded in the horizon opened by the willing will" (WOI 2, 214). But what does it mean for the myself to be embedded in that horizon? I would suggest the willing will must

finally will not merely some objective condition, but must be a matter of the myself willing itself to be itself. If at every moment my willed will embraces certain actions in the context of the horizon of my willing will, and if it is possible for me to understand more or less well the self-ideal made accessible through the horizon opened by the willing will, then my “relation” to my ideal self must somehow be within this very upsurge of willing and aspiring that constitutes my being at every moment.

What is non-objectively experienced as a unity is not merely a “pure I,” but *being* this personified self. The “act transcendence of the pure I” does not mean that the pure I, and the I that acts, and the I who I am in the fullness of who I am, are in any sense multiple “I’s.” The non-objective self-experience of the “pure I” is none other than the non-objective self-experience of the personified self. My personified self is not a set of objective traits that somehow cling to me, but is truly who I am—even though the pure I in a sense also transcends my personified self, and my ideal self somehow transcends the person I have become. In describing the witnessing of conscience as other than an intentional act, and in insisting on the sameness of the pure I, the personified self, and the ideal self, I think Hart is getting at the point that we experience this very unity non-objectively, in the unity of our non-objective self experience flowing into itself (as Henry would say). And the willing will is a matter not of direction toward an object, but rather of this very non-objective flow of self into self. The motivation in being true to who we are is that we take our life seriously. That involves the awakening of Existenz. And the awakening of Existenz has to do with how we come to grips with ourselves. Such “coming to grips,” such “being honest with oneself,” such “taking one’s life seriously,” is most primordially a matter of, in a non-objective way, getting behind or getting on board of one’s own life flowing into itself as the unity of the pure I, the personified and personifying self, and the ideal self.

"Being a certain kind of person" cannot be separated from motive. One's motive is finally the fullness of who one is. As Hart puts it, "the willing of the person as a personal self-willing through a specific willing is also a willing of 'oneself' whose willing, we propose, surpasses any specific intending" (WOI 2, 167). What this amounts to is that "the ideal self" that one aspires to be is never a matter of anything objectively pregiven or known in its fullness and totality. Rather, one's sense of the kind of person one really wants to be grows out of constantly asking oneself, on the basis of the imagination of self presence in acting: "do I want to be the kind of person who would do thus and such?" Here, "do" does not refer simply to the overt action objectively considered, but the action as done by a certain kind of person, out of the general will that the person wills as the kind of person he is. Conscience is a constant, ineluctable witnessing—and it is because of this witnessing that when one questions oneself about a proposed, imagined action or way of being, one can hear an answer.

In answering the question of the "relation" between the myself and its "personification," Hart concludes that the personification emerges out of the myself.

When we claim that the "myself" is a dynamism that "personifies itself" and thus the person is born by the general will inaugurated by the "myself," we make, needless to say, a speculative leap. ... It is a speculation because the "myself," as brought to light in reflection on self-awareness, as well as in our non-ascriptive referring through the indexical "I," as well as in the thought experiments, and in the transcendental reduction, is without any specific striving or willing toward any specific horizon. Here the "myself" is bereft of properties, habituality, and projects. Yet what we know in our proper cognitive acts of knowing is the personification of the "myself" who is laced with

properties; we know the “myself” only as an abstract moment in what we are calling its “personification,” i.e., the full concretion of what we refer to with “I.” (WOI 2, 176)

This emergence of the “personification” can be understood in terms of the way each explicit act emerges out of “I.” Inseparable from our non-objective self experience is the sense of “I can.” Our knowing this “I can” is the non-objective knowing whereby we are able to consciously begin to act. This “I can” is prior to our acts. While the inherent teleology of consciousness is phenomenologically evident through this sense of “I can,” Hart claims the thesis that the “pure I” is the source and origin of the personified self, is not evident in the same way—and therefore describes this thesis as a speculation. This speculation aims at resolving “the problem of bridging the seemingly incommensurate aspects of oneself, i.e., as the non-ascriptive referent of ‘I’ and as the property-rich person in the world” by introducing “the entelechial function of the ‘myself’” (WOI 2, 210). Hart speculates that the ‘myself’ is an entelechy because it has, or fundamentally is, an immanent striving toward itself as its ideal self, and that the always inadequate realization of this striving is the “personified” self. Hart calls this notion a speculation because this striving or willing has no specific intentional object. And yet it does involve the very core of the self in an “ideal framework.”

Hart terms “speculation” that which is not phenomenologically evident. At this juncture I venture the question: is the lack of a specific object horizon in this case really tantamount to the absence of phenomenological evidence? If we are willing to acknowledge non-objective evidence as fully valid in the case of the non-objective self experience of the pure I, is it not also possible that non-objective dimensions of that experience may be evident in their own way? May not the “ideal framework” as well as the “tautological properties” of the self themselves be dimensions of the non-objective being and non-objective experience of the self, and as such

qualify as phenomenologically evident, albeit in a way more elusive than that of the evidence of the ‘myself’ as such?

Hart and Husserl claim that in addition to one’s individual willings there is one’s general will. And corresponding to this general will, it would seem, is a general “I can”—which in turn would correspond exactly to the entelechy of personification immanent in the myself. That general will is “heading toward an intersubjective ideal” (WOI 2, 176). Love is the intersubjective ideal in the horizon of the willing will. It is essential to the “‘ideal’ axiological context” in which “the unique essence of the ‘myself’ has to be embedded.” Love emerges as the calling of *Existenz*. It is through love that one most truly *is* oneself.

“The one thing needful” at the heart of the self in its aspiration to its ideal self is none other than love, which, as Hart argues, targets the unique ipseity of the Other. And Hart points out that our self-knowledge in terms of *Existenz* as knowing its calling to love—or as realizing it has missed that calling— is non-propositional (WOI 2, 273). Hart’s conclusion, in Book 2, that love is the teleology of ipseity is rooted in the phenomenology of intersubjectivity he develops in Book 1. Hart’s starting point there is Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity. Husserl held that others are present to us through empathic perception. Empathic perception depends upon the encounter with the bodily presence of the Other. Hart accepts this account of empathy. He claims that love is the fulfillment of empathy, and that in fact we do not fully perceive the Other through empathy alone, but only through its fulfillment in love. In love, we refer to the Other as “you” in a unique way that targets “that which is essentially incommunicable and unique” (WOI 1, 173-74). That is to say, love targets the ipseity itself of the other—that which is beyond all properties, and that which most essentially makes the Other a you as one who also can say I. Hart wrestles with the question of the sense in which the ipseity of the Other is present, even



though it is essentially absent “as first person experience.” If it is present, it is present in the way that something “believed-in” is present.

We are calling this a belief-in because the other ipseity and self-experiencing remains absent for us as an essential transcendent abyss. But that density of meaning and transcendent pole of our affections is no more a postulation than is the meaning of a word a postulation on top of the physical marks or sounds that make up the word, or my experience of your pain in your grimace an inference or lamination on top of the perception of your bodily expression. (WOI 1, 213-14)

It appears that the intentional act of love is an act of believing-in which grasps the ipseity of the Other even though that ipseity is “an essential transcendent abyss.”

But is the Other as absent as Husserl and Hart suggest? Consider the simple example of my ability to perceive another’s pain through a facial expression such as a grimace. The believing-in Hart refers to must be the core dimension of my experience of your pain in your grimace. Such intentional believing-in which targets your ipseity, does so through my perceptual experience of your grimace. Such targeted ipseity infused in visual perception is no “postulation,” and yet it falls short, in some way, of presence. It seems to me that the nature of such deficient presence is a major unresolved issue in Husserl’s philosophy. Hart takes a significant step forward in suggesting that love is a ‘believing-in’ which surmounts the inherent absence of the Other. But we may then ask: is this a *blind* faith, or does it involve some sort of presence?. And then, if so, what sort of presence?

The issue Hart is here sorting out in such detail is of course a notoriously difficult one. The introduction of the notion of non-objective experience to the question of the empathic perception of the other is a significant step forward in the analysis of our “knowledge of other

minds,” and it of course also introduces new difficulties. The question becomes: in what sense may the non-objective self-experience of Others be present to me? The question of how your non-objective, lived through experience of your own pain, *as* non-objective, lived through experience, may be present to me, comes very clearly to the fore through the example of my perception of your grimace. I would urge that this example lead us to consider that the abyssal absence of the other’s non-objective self experience may not be as unqualified as Hart seems to suggest. What does it mean to encounter the very ipseity of the Other, especially that other ipseity devotion to which constitutes the one thing needful for the true unity of the self as it non-objectively encounters itself as Existenz? If such devotion is a form of intentionality, in what way does it differ from object intentionality? How is it that I can encounter an Other ipseity, which is itself non-objective experience, merely through an intentionality, which is to say, objective experience? And how is it that such an encounter can and must shape, on the deepest level, who I am in my own non-objective experience and being?

Hart deals eloquently and in great detail with what is perhaps the essential issue and struggle at the heart of love: what it means to love another for his or her own sake. In Hart’s terms, to love another for his or her own sake means to love the very ipseity of another. It is true that a great deal of what people consider to be love is in fact not love for the Other in his or her very ipseity, but rather love for the good qualities she or he possesses, or even simply for those qualities one finds pleasing or that fulfill one’s own needs. But love, Hart claims, goes beyond love for good qualities or for what benefits me. The destiny of love is to embrace and affirm the radiance of the very ipseity which fundamentally makes the Other *you*, who rightly refer to yourself as I. Love embraces ipseity as a value—but it is important to specify what we mean by value in this instance. For ipseity is clearly not one value among others. And it is not as if

ipseity has value as a property, or has some specifiable characteristic which gives it value. And the whole point here is also that the “value” of ipseity is not contingent upon any property or characteristic—such as talent, usefulness, or moral virtue—of the person whose ipseity it is.

Given our basic theses that in empathic presencing and its fulfillment in love we have a non-ascriptive presencing of the ipseity of the Others, we have insisted on regarding the “being as well as its value” as “the whole” and not to see the splendor or *dignitas* of the person as a property. Rather the *dignitas* or “ontological value,” as we see it is not an aspect of the ipseity, not a part at all, but is wholly pervasive of the person. (WOI 1, 254)

I suggest that what Hart names the “ontological value” of ipseity ranks as what he elsewhere calls a “tautological property.” Another way to describe such “tautological properties,” I have suggested, is that they are dimension of the being of ipseity as such, rather than properties all ipseities have, or even necessarily have.

There is an intimate bond between ipseity as the propertyless individual essence of “I,” and the deepest destiny of empathy and love. But Hart points out and carefully works through the difficulties in this view. What could it possibly mean to love “someone’s” sheer ipseity? How could something seemingly so abstract be the object of love? But to regard ipseity as an abstract aspect of the Other would be a complete misunderstanding. ‘Ipseity’ is the word for the very *opposite* of what is abstract. Ipseity is precisely that by virtue of which an individual *is* individual, actual, and concrete. But even if love which targets ipseity cannot be love for some abstract feature, it is not easy to grasp what that love for ipseity would concretely mean. One example would be the rare case of the saint. A way to define saintliness would be the ability to see and affirm in anyone and everyone the splendor of individual ipseity, to sense and never lose an absolute and profound reverence in the face of the dignity of each individual. In more

everyday cases, it would seem that love depends entirely on respect for the good qualities of the Other. But there are also cases—at least in some cases of friendship and in some cases of love for a life-partner—where love which is at least initially preferential goes deeper. Clearly, the beginning of a love relationship requires that the lovers value and appreciate something specific about each other—and not “just” their sheer ipseities. But it lies in the destiny of love that these attractive or admirable qualities lead beyond themselves to the sheer ipseity. The fulfillment of love lies in loving the other purely and simply for herself. Such love then redounds to the admirable qualities—which are now loved not simply because they are admirable, but because they are the qualities of that one whom one loves for herself. It may even be the case that the original qualities that formed the basis of the attraction reveal themselves as illusions, or otherwise fall away. But, Hart asks, does this mean that the love was foolish, or that one would be a fool to continue to love?

These instances must be seen over against the important cases of the love that persists when the initial properties generating the “because” have vanished.... We may not agree, but still find it “natural,” if regrettable from our perspective, because it belongs to the “nature” or “essence” of love that the lover persists when the person turns out to have other qualities than those the beloved was thought to have or no longer has the qualities she originally had. (WOI 1, 232)

On the other hand, a love relationship that is mutual and healthy can become deeper, with the lovers discovering in themselves and each other ever deeper, unexpected depths: “the unique intentionality of love has a clarity regarding both the absolute transcendence and unbridgeable inwardness *and* that there is a bond of inwardnesses. When this is reciprocated we may speak of a communion of inwardnesses” (WOI 1, 218).

The essence of love is that it targets the ipseity, the 'myself' of the Other. In knowing the ipseity, and knowing the ipseity *as such* as “incomparably good,” one does not know something about the ipseity, in the sense of a property. Rather, to truly know the ipseity *as such* is to know its incomparable goodness (WOI 2, 277). And just as one most truly knows, and is, oneself through love, so also it is only through love that one can most fully and truly know the Other.

### **The Self and God**

Hart's project culminates in a “philosophical theology of vocation.” This third and final stage of his project grows logically and organically out of everything that has gone before, completing his exploration of what it means to be a self. But at the same time it takes a completely new direction, constituting a fully worked out theology. Hart works out a theology whose basic perspective contrasts distinctly with his earlier reflections as contained in "A Precipit of Husserlian Theology" and *The Person and the Common Life*. The most significant sources of Hart's new perspective are Aquinas, the Thomistic and phenomenological contributions of Thomas Prufer and Robert Sokolowski, Kierkegaard, Plotinus, and Eckhart.

Hart owes the overall framework of his theology to Robert Sokolowski's *The God of Faith and Reason*. The basic stance of that work is the Thomistic one that grace perfects nature and that faith fulfills, rather than supplants, reason. Sokolowski's advance over Thomas lies in his incorporation of the insights of phenomenology into the understanding of the nature of reason—insights which I agree represent a significant step forward over against both Thomism and modern philosophy through Kant. Sokolowski preserves Thomas's sense that though faith fulfills reason, it is more than the fulfillment of what reason on its own could anticipate. Hart claims that Thomas Prufer and Sokolowski have also taken a significant step forward within the

Thomistic tradition—clarifying the very nature of God's transcendence. Sokolowski notes that what may be most significant about Anselm's ontological argument is not the argument itself but what is implicit in the way Anselm defines God: that than which nothing greater can be or be conceived. If nothing greater than God can be or be conceived, then it follows that God plus the world is not greater than God alone—otherwise God would not be that than which nothing can be greater. This means that God creates the world not out of any need or lack, but out of sheer generosity. Sokolowski names the distinction between God and the world thus defined, "the Christian distinction," and Hart assigns the term "the theological distinction" to this concept. However, Hart does regard this distinction as Sokolowski defines it as of absolutely central importance.

Hart brings together the theological distinction with the notion of each "myself" as an individual essence or unique haecceity and the Thomistic notion of exemplars of all created things in the mind of God. For Hart, the exemplars are not limited to kinds of objects. Rather, each ipseity is or has a unique exemplar in the mind of God. The exemplar of each ipseity is not some sort of form or essence of "ipseity" as such—rather, ipseity is such that each ipseity is an individual essence for which the possibility of multiple instantiations is meaningless. And each ipseity is not known to God merely as an object. Rather, God is interior to the very interiority of each ipseity, interior to its very non-objective self-awareness, more interior to each I than each I is interior to itself.

The theological speculation in which *Who One Is* culminates is an original synthesis of themes in Aquinas and Plotinus: specifically of Aquinas's doctrine of divine exemplars with Plotinus's doctrine that, at least on Hart's interpretation, each individual "myself" has an eternal exemplar in the One (WOI 2, 372). From the Thomistic perspective, Hart interprets these

exemplars as the fruits of God's reflection on God's own essence. And this same God would be undiminished in perfection even had he not created the world and the "myselfs" living in the world. The emergence of the "myselfs" is an act of pure generosity and not the fulfillment of a lack or the actualization of a potentiality. One may well question what it could possibly mean for God to have not created the world. Would God still be God? How could a good God possibly deny being to others? But the very meaning of generosity lies in the lack of necessity. One might suppose that a good God, being identical with goodness itself, and being the reason for the identity of goodness with being, could not possibly not desire to share being with others. On the other side, as Hart points out, isn't there something presumptuous in me swelling up with offense at the thought that God would have been undiminished in perfection had he not created the all important ME?

Hart pursues the speculative construction of a Thomistic-Plotinian idea of exemplarism in great detail. The distinction between God and any created "myself" makes each ipseity *other* than God, with *its own* being, and makes that being other than God's being. But nevertheless, "what each ipseity refers to as 'myself' is not absolutely other to the divine subjectivity" (WOI 2, 489-90). God, who is his own *esse*, and who is pure "to be" as such, gives being to each creature. So the "relation" of God to each creature must be something like the relation of "to be" as such to each creature's being.

The foundation and warrant for the legitimacy in Hart's offered speculations lies, as he acknowledges, in what Sokolowski calls the "logical space" opened up by Christian revelation. I think this may be understood in two senses—there is a sense in which the Christian tradition introduces certain ideas about God—such as the "Christian distinction"—even though those, or similar, ideas may have emerged elsewhere, for example in Plotinus. But revelation also

provides a form of justification for the validity of these speculations which the evidence of phenomenology does not offer. Within this "logical space," Hart identifies three senses of "myself" in terms of my relation to God, which represent "three distinct modes of being," which are nevertheless three modes of being of the one "myself," a "myself" which is the same in the three modes, but nevertheless not absolutely identical (WOI 2, 487-88). In the first mode of the "myself," God's knowledge of "each" myself is "indistinguishable and inseparable from the divine essence"—it is God's knowledge of Godself. The second mode is the first to introduce otherness into the essence of God. Of course, this means that it represents God's own introduction of otherness into his own essence, which is the very meaning of creation. Only at this stage can we speak of the divine exemplars of the ipseities.

In the second mode God knows the "myself" as part of the divine essence as imitable and communicable, and therefore of necessity knows the "myself" in its perfect form, i.e.

God knows, in knowing God's essence as imitable, "myself" as "supra-myself...." *Quoad nos* this is the "myself" in its true self, the Who one is coincident with the ideal *sort* of person one is called to be. (WOI 2, 487)

The transition from the first to the second mode represents a shift "from absolute unity and simplicity to the otherness of God in God's being present to Godself." The second mode is that of the exemplar which is the ideal self I aspire to be and which I equally "really am," and is also the exemplar according to which God creates me as an actual person. The third mode is the actual created myself gradually realizing itself through personification.

The three modes, as Hart develops them, relate to how creation is to be understood within the context of what he calls the theological distinction. As Hart also points out, a useful guide (though not really adequate explanation) to this distinction might be Barry Miller's distinction



between a "limit simpliciter" and a "limit concept" (WOI 2, 461). A limit simpliciter is one of infinite approximation, for example as in mathematics when we conceive of an infinite series of polygons inscribed in a circle such that they approach the limit of the circle. The "limit concept" in this case would be the circle itself. The point being that the infinitization of the polygon never actually achieves the circle itself, since, "circle" inherently simply cannot be accounted for in terms of "many sided figure."

Hart presents this analogy as just that: an analogy. A theological analogy does not aspire to explain or directly grasp God, but only to provide a glimpse of understanding that does move understanding forward without reaching any sort of final goal. A God which we can imagine or conceive apart from revelation is only a limit simpliciter. The God of Christian revelation, the God of such perfection that the addition of the world would not represent a degree of value greater than that of God alone, would be a limit concept. Hart also employs this distinction between "limit simpliciter" and limit concept to understand the distinction between the first and the second modes of the being of each "myself."

When we say God is *hyper-moi* there is a sense in which we are saying that God is "myself" both eminently and as a limit case.... Even though the "myself" is always of necessity itself and as the non-sortal referent of a non-ascriptive reference does not admit being a regulative idea we may posit it as the entelechy of the person, as what constitutes the infinite ideal of the true self of the person. As such, we may speculate, it reflects the way the unique essence exists in the essence of God. (WOI 2, 490)

In the first mode, God's knowledge of each "myself" is "indistinguishable and inseparable from the divine essence"—the divine essence as absolutely simple and without otherness. This mode is each "myself" as a "limit case." The second mode is the ideal self which offers itself to ever

closer approximations, the ideal self we really do participate in, which at its maximum is the infinitization of our efforts to reach it—in other words, the "limit simpliciter" of the ideal self. To further distinguish the first from the second and third modes, Hart asserts that "these other (two) modes, i.e., the exemplary eidos 'myself' and the 'myself' personified in the creature JG Hart, although aspects of the same 'myself,' are not perfectly identical with the first mode and therefore not identical with the divine essence. The exemplar or *ratio* of "myself" can be communicated in a way the divine essence is not communicated." (WOI 2, 492)

Hart holds that the three modes are in some way modes of the *same* myself, but they are not the *identical* myself. Sameness involves otherness and difference; identity is sameness with no otherness and difference. The second mode, thought of analogously as God's reflexive presence to Godself, institutes otherness and difference into God's essence, i.e., Godself *as* communicable. This notion is especially difficult in the light of the first (analogous non-reflexive presential) mode in which the "myself" is "indistinguishable and inseparable from the divine essence"—and is *not yet* God's essence as "imitable and communicable." If that is so, in what sense can the first mode be a mode of the *same* myself? Hart approaches the question in this way:

According to the dogma of The Theological Distinction, with the creation of the "myself" according to the exemplar, God bestows *esse*, and along with it a *sameness* or *likeness* to the divine essence; but I myself do not share in or become one or identical with the transcendent divine essence. The ancient teaching applies here: As one does not properly say "I resemble my likeness in the mirror," but rather "The likeness resembles me," so the divine essence (encompassing the uncreated essence of the "myself") does not resemble the created "myself" but it is the other way around. (WOI 2, 491)

According to the idea of creation based on the theological distinction, God is not really related to the world, but the world is related to God. As created *esse*, the deepest sense of the world is that it stands in a relation of absolute dependence. The world is not something that in any way somehow first faces God as an existent to which God could then be related. Likewise, my “to be,” which is equivalent to “myself,” resembles God’s “to be,” as deriving from and utterly dependent on it; however, God’s “to be” does not resemble my “to be.” My “to be” as the “to be” of “myself,” ultimately derives from the “to be” of Godself, and it derives from nothing other than that very “to be,” and yet I do not “share in” or “participate in” God’s “to be.”

This is of course a very difficult matter. I think its difficulty derives from the difficulty of the theological distinction itself. If I do not add to the totality of being and perfection, whatever reality or perfection I represent must already be somehow contained in God’s essence. In this sense “God is ‘myself’ both eminently and as a limit case.” The very meaning of creation is that God can choose ‘myself’ from all eternity as an ideal exemplar and bring me into being. This bringing into being can have no other source than God’s “to be” itself. God chooses *me* by way of choosing Godself as communicable, i.e., via the divine exemplar. How are we to understand this mystery whereby God grants being to creatures? Perhaps the point of the theological distinction is that creation means precisely not creatures participating in God’s own being, but God’s granting creatures their own being. The imponderable question seems to be what we mean by “a creature’s own being.” As being, it derives from God’s being, and, as being, it can have nothing to do but resemble God’s being. Yet God, as the creator, does not resemble the being of the creature. God does not depend upon or derive from God’s creatures. And apparently for the theological distinction, since God does not depend upon or derive from

God's creatures, God is not related to God's creatures, and such a lack of relation includes a lack of resemblance, even though the creatures are related to, and resemble God.

Finally, I would like to turn to the theme of how we know any of this. Hart sums up the nature of faith in these terms:

Faith's intention of what is beyond the world finds a "natural" launching pad in the horizon of the world as the horizon of the spirit's desire to understand and find fulfillment. This horizon opens up the world to an indeterminacy and adumbration perhaps of determinable indeterminacy, if not mystery. But this, we have suggested, opens us up to a regulative ideal or limit simpliciter. But in *The Theological Distinction* we have to do with what is elusive in a different way because it is essentially different, i.e., it is the limit case to which the horizon points but to which it never properly draws near. But this infinite remoteness is *precisely what faith makes present*—obviously not in a filled intention of a perception or after the fashion of filled intention of an insight into an intelligible pattern that before was missing and eluded one's grasp; rather, this infinite remoteness or immeasurable Infinity is present through an unconditional allegiance and devotion, a position-taking that never surmounts darkness and obscurity, and thus it is an allegiance that is never absolutely free of having for an edge a possible doubt. (WOI 2, 542)

Hart claims that our experience of the horizon of the world involves "the spirit's desire to understand and find fulfillment," and that Christian revelation does, as it were, meet with, respond to, or welcome that desire. But that desire and that experience on their own, if they lead to any concept of an infinite God at all, can at most lead to a concept representing a "limit simpliciter." Yet, Hart claims, faith makes present the "infinite remoteness" of the God of The

Theological Distinction, and the infinity of this “infinite remoteness” is represented by a “limit concept,” and not a mere “limit simpliciter.”

But yet “infinite remoteness” cannot be *all* that faith makes present—and I do not think that Hart means to suggest any such thing. The experience of faith certainly is that of an absence and “infinite remoteness”—but is it merely that of an absence and infinite remoteness? Doesn’t faith make present God’s love, which is also to say God as a person? And isn’t this something in some sense perceived and experienced—though obviously not perceived and experienced in the way the world or other people are? The central positive theological theme Hart develops is that, while God is “infinitely remote,” at the same time, “God knew his own before they even were, and also ordained that they should be shaped to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the eldest among a large family of brothers. And those whom he called he has justified, and to those whom he has justified he has also given his splendor” (*Romans* 8:29–30).

Hart interprets God’s “foreknowing” in this passage in the sense of exemplarism. And this “foreknowing” is what revelation reveals. While we seem to be wandering about in the world, buffeted back and forth by fortune and our own waywardness, all the time each of us, each myself, abides with God eternally. This same I which is so anxious and wayward, is the same as its eternal exemplar, and even, in a very qualified sense, the same as God. Christian and Plotinian exemplarism share the sense of the eternal exemplar of each ipseity abiding in God, and also the sense that a separation from God has occurred which needs to be healed. But Christian faith believes in the action of Christ as that which heals the separation. God is infinitely remote from us, from our point of view. But from God’s point of view, God is infinitely close. And revelation must mean that in spite of the infinite remoteness, God has

disclosed to us something of his own point of view. And for Christians what God has disclosed of his point of view is the action of Christ in reconciling humans to God.

But what sort of presence does the disclosure of Christian revelation represent? It is not the presence of a “filled intention.” It is a presence that arises only through faith. It does not seem that faith creates a new sort of presence which is then somehow in our possession. And yet does what is believed make any sense at all? To say that revelation opens up, for example, some kind of new logical space in which a new form of reflection becomes possible, is to say that faith must make some kind of sense. This “logical space” makes accessible a kind of validation for concepts not available within the horizon of the world or even through transcendental reflection on the appearing of the world. And yet this form of validation is not a matter of a filled intention in the manner either of empirical or transcendental evidence. Faith is not an achievement of the individual, but is the gift of grace. Concerning grace, Hart has this to say:

In terms of The Theological Distinction we may say that the grace of the Spirit awakens in the person an awareness of the connection between Existenz as inseparable from her willing will and the teaching of the Scriptures and Tradition. And yet, unless this willing will is “elevated” to what is beyond the horizon of the world, we have reason to think of this religious stance as “merely” natural religion, as holy and as edifying as it might well be. That is, it is a stance in regard to the infinite ideals latent in the world opened up by the willing will’s dynamism. As such it is a stance in regard to the limit simpliciter, and does not move beyond the infinitization and the ultimate horizon of the world to the limit case (as Barry Miller would put it). (WOI 2, 529-30)

One problem for the "Christian distinction" is that the God of the "Christian distinction," conceptually, does not seem at all necessarily dependent upon Christian revelation. What is to

prevent anyone, including a "pagan" philosopher, from conceiving of a creator of the world, and then conceiving of this creator as "that than which no greater can be or be conceived" and then from making the thoroughly logical inference that if this god really is "that than which no greater can be conceived," then the world plus this god could not be greater than this god alone?

Sokolowski does assert that the life of faith is more than just a judgment about a proposition—it involves *living* the Christian distinction (see *The God of Faith and Reason*, chap. 7). But how in fact is a conceptual distinction related to the actual living of a life of faith? Sokolowski agrees that the distinction is lived before it is made intellectually. That is why a "pagan" philosopher simply making the distinction as an intellectual exercise is missing the point. And here again, not simply because he lacks the grace which would lead him to believe that such a God exists, but because he has not lived "the distinction" in the first place. But, again, what does it mean to live "the distinction" rather than just entertain it intellectually or even affirm the proposition that such a God exists?

This is where I think Hart has something very important to offer. For Hart addresses the question, who is it who responds to revelation? Who is it who has faith in God and lives the theological distinction? Hart's answer, would be, I think, *Existenz*. Hart's entire project is an attempt to do justice to the idea that faith is an engagement of the whole person, and that "the whole person" cannot be reduced to one or two faculties, or a collection of multiple faculties. The myself, as *Existenz*, aspires to become its ideal self. But Hart makes it clear that it is impossible to reduce that ideal to a definite concept, or to grasp it objectively. And the calling of *Existenz* is love. In Christian faith, this calling reveals itself as the calling of God. Not only I, but my ideal self, are revealed as created by God, and as eternally abiding in God. And the God

in which I myself abide, as inseparably the person I have become and my ideal self, and as the God who calls me to love, is the God of the Christian distinction.

The central question here is that of the relationship of theological ideas to lived faith, and of lived faith to theological ideas. Lived faith involves the discovery of the one thing needful, of the ideal which gives meaning to Existenz, and indeed introduces a kind of meaning beyond what Existenz on its own was able to expect. But according to Hart and Sokolowski lived faith also opens up a new “logical space” for reflection. I do not think that the advent of this new logical space is a matter simply of new ideas. Even a “pagan” could possibly conceive of the ontological argument. But the “pagan” wouldn’t care about it. The “logical space” opened up by faith seems rather to be that which offers some kind of new justification for speculative ideas. Should we conceive this justification as a new form of experienced evidence, which we can then claim as giving us a capacity to know God? Or should we conceive revelation as the sheer authorization of ideas by divine fiat? Neither alternative seems to quite fit what Hart and Sokolowski here have in mind. For the “logical space” which makes a whole new realm of meaningful and justifiable thought possible is rooted in our “*living* the distinction,” and, according to Hart and Sokolowski, living the distinction itself depends upon faith that reaches us through Tradition and Scripture. In Hart’s terms, it is rooted in the response of Existenz to revelation.

Living the distinction means that the “willing will is ‘elevated’ to what is beyond the horizon of the world.” And part of such “elevation” may be the sense of oneself as having or as being an eternal exemplar in the mind of God. Being “elevated to what is beyond the horizon of the world” is precisely what makes convincing the idea of God, and the ideal self, as “limit concepts.” But what does it mean to “be elevated”? *Romans* 8:29–30 is *moving* and *beautiful*,



and surely its beauty plays an essential role in the believer's sense of God and the believer's conviction, although faith is clearly more than just a moving experience. "Being moved" is a dimension of Existenz that exceeds thought directed toward concepts. But what role do beauty and emotion play? The challenge for theology here is to understand how faith is, on the one hand, not simply a matter of the depths of our experience as Existenz, but on the other, is not simply a matter of blindly obeying a fiat that we are unable to experience as other than arbitrary. In what sense does faith make sense? In what sense is Christian faith an experience of what Christian revelation reveals? Hart's reflections on the relation of faith, revelation, and Existenz finally lead toward, and begin to illuminate, these essential theological questions. It seems to me that Hart's detailed study of Existenz in relation to faith leads directly into the sorts of considerations that Hans Urs von Balthasar gathers under the heading of "theological aesthetics," especially in the first volume of *The Glory of the Lord*. For von Balthasar, as for Hart, Christian experience exceeds what we can know as we naturally are. It is not simply a matter of a filled intention, and it is not a possession we can claim for ourselves. Yet faith, in some sense very difficult to define, cannot be without a dimension of experience:

Whoever confronts the whole truth—not only man's truth and the truth of the world, but the truth of a God who bestows himself on man...desires to choose as his first word...one that is broad enough to foster and include all the words that follow, and clear enough to penetrate all the others with its light.... It is a word from which religion, and theology in particular, have distanced themselves in modern times.... Yet if the philosopher cannot begin with this word, but can at best conclude with it...should not the Christian for this very reason perhaps take it as *his* first word? .... Beauty is the word that shall be our first.

(17-18)

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